



THE PRIZE

PHILIPPIANS 1.21-26

For the year 2010, the theme of DaySpring Church is “Focus Forward.” The idea is that we must keep our eyes on Christ as well as on the mission that He has set before us.

During this season of Easter and the beginnings of Spring, our theme has been “Focus on Life.” That’s why we call this our “Focus on Life” Sunday.

Here are a couple of questions that each of us needs to answer:

1. To me, life is _____.
2. To me, death is _____.

What you put in those blanks will speak volumes about your concept of life and death as well as your understanding about your relationship with Christ.

If asked those questions in any other context other than church, how many of us would have begun thinking about the answers in terms of our relationship with God?

What means life to you is that which turns you on, fires you up, gives you life.

I am sure there have been times that you have had to go somewhere or do something that you really did not want to do. I have gone to the mall when I really didn’t want to go. So I dragged along to endure the process. However, as soon as I saw the bookstore, suddenly I came alive.

For the Christian, everything we do in our lives should be centered around our relationship with Christ.

Matt. 6:33 ...seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

1 Cor. 10:31 ...whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.



1 Tim. 4:8 ...while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

In our text for today, the Apostle Paul expresses in a concise statement his philosophy of life and death.

Read text.

I. Confession (v. 21)

A. To live is Christ...

Paul – Focused on Life	
I.	Confession
II.	Conflict
III.	Confidence
IV.	Contentment

Typically, we should not begin an answer to a question concerning doctrine with “Well, to me...”

The truth of Scripture is not dependent on what we believe about it or whether we believe or not. The Bible is the Word of God, infallible, inerrant, and . What it says is truth.

2 Peter 1:20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation.

Yet Paul begins verse 21 with “To me...” What follows is a doctrinal statement, but it is not based on Paul’s opinion. It is based on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as is all of the Bible.

What follows is just a part of Paul’s personal testimony concerning his relationship with Christ.

Paul did not attribute happiness of life or success in this world to his accomplishments related to honor, education, finances, or pleasure, but to the single purpose of glorifying Christ with his entire being.

His goal was...

- to **imitate** Christ – to make Christ the model of his life
- to **enjoy** Christ – to find comfort in His salvation and communion in His sustaining love
- to **know** Christ – not just in name or in knowledge, but in the intimate relationship of Redeemer and redeemed

- to **make Christ known** – to devote his talents and gifts to sharing the name of Christ and His grace to as much of mankind as possible.

Romans 11:34 *For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? 35 Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

For Paul – and it should be true for all who claim Christ as Savior – life was Christ.

- Christ was more than just the source of life
- Christianity was more than Christ living in him
- Christianity was more than just submission to Christ.

Christianity is all of these things and more. But Paul is saying that life for him was more than individual truths. Life is the sum of all that Christ is.

Col. 3:4 *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

CT Studd

...was at a fair one day and saw a man pumping a well as hard and fast as he had ever seen any man pump. Studd watched him for about an hour and the man never slowed down. Studd was mystified until he walked over to the man and noticed that his elbows were hinges and he was a wooden figure and "he wasn't pumping the well, but the well was pumping him.

The reason is that the water flowing through the pump came from an artesian well. In an artesian well, the water table is above the well providing the power to flow without being pumped.

In this case, the power of the water from the well flowed through the pump, giving life to the "man" doing the pumping.

That is the way it works in the Christian life.

Jesus said I will be in you a fountain of water welling up inside of you and flowing out of you to the rest of the world.

The life of that man was the water from the well.

The life of a Christian is Jesus, the water of life.

B. To die is gain...

Those words seem to contradict everything our culture teaches. We want to save our lives at any cost. Self-preservation is the greatest priority for all of us.

So what did Paul mean by "to die is gain"?

Illustration

A bank in Binghamton, New York, had some flowers sent to a competitor who had recently moved into a new building. There was a mix up at the flower shop, and the card sent with the arrangement read,

"With our deepest sympathy."

The florist, who was greatly embarrassed, apologized. But he was even more embarrassed when he realized that the card intended for the bank was attached to a floral arrangement sent to a funeral home in honor of a deceased person. That card read,

"Congratulations on your new location!"

None of us would want that to happen in real life, but for the Christian, it would not be an incorrect sentiment to express at a funeral.

John 1.1 *Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you,*

I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

For the Christian, death is the end of the limitations that keep us from being fully united with Christ.

2 Cor. 5:1 For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

When a Christian dies, he (or she) really begins to live to the full, for he passes into the perfect, eternal, glorious union with Christ unhindered by the world, the flesh and the devil.

Once we have passed through the veil of death, we no longer have to contend with sin or sorrow or pain or suffering. All of those things are behind us – forgotten.

The word “gain” is an accounting term which means that the bottom line of the accounting ledger is in the black. In other words, we made a profit.

Thus Paul could say, “For me, to live is Christ, but to die is more Christ.”

II. Conflict (v. 22-23)

Yet there was in Paul a conflict of sorts. Though there is great humility and love of Christ in this verse, there is, at the same time, a degree of selfishness.

To remain on this earth is Christ; to die is to spend eternity in the presence of Christ.

Phil. 1:22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. (ESV)

Paul: “If I am to remain on this earth and live for many more years, that is ok, because I know that Christ has a work for me and a plan for me to be fruitful in that work.”

Phil. 1:22 ...Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell.

Paul: “Yet I must admit, I am not sure which I prefer most.”

Phil. 1:23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Paul: “What would be best for me?”

“To live would be ok. I have Christ as Savior who promised He would be with me always.

“To die would be equally as welcome because the Savior has prepared a place for me that where he is, there I will be also.”

“Either way, I am in the presence of and near the person of Christ, Who is my life.

“Yet there is this dilemma:

“To be with Christ in Heaven would be far better for me.

Phil. 1:24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

There was conflict in Paul’s heart as he considered the alternatives. Yet there are two things that eased the conflict for him.

1. Paul knew that he was not in control of when he would die. That is in the providence of God.

Heb. 9:27 ...it is appointed for men to die once...

Death is not a choice, but an appointment.

2. Paul knew that when Christ came into his heart, that he was a new creation. The selfish desires of his heart Christ was slowly but surely replacing with the selfless love for others.

So Paul knew God’s answer to his prayer. And because of his faith in the leading of God, Paul could express his...

III. Confidence

Phil. 1:25 *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith,*

Paul has come to a conviction – a realization that, even though his death may appear imminent due to his imprisonment, that God will allow him to live so that he may continue to help meet the spiritual needs of his disciples.

Paul realized that it was far better for the saints on earth for him to remain alive than it was for him to be with Jesus in heaven.

He was confident of this: As long as God has a purpose for your life – until God determines that your work on this earth is done – you are immortal.

We fear going to particular places such as the mission field, especially when those places are in the more remote areas of the world or in areas of conflict. But we fear because we have not yet come to the realization that God is in control of our lives.

If you are a child of God – a Christian – no one can take your life until God is ready for it to be taken. You cannot even take your own life until God is finished with you.

Paul had that confidence: “I know I will continue to live because there is still work to be done related to your spiritual growth and your joy in the faith.”

Phil. 1:26 *so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.*

Paul said, “To live is Christ.”

Paul knew that Christ dwells within the hearts of His people – the church. He knew that as long as he was touching the church of Christ – that is, the people of Christ – then he was touching the body of Christ. It is hard to get any more intimate with Christ than that.

Because Paul knew that Christ was life, he experienced not only confidence, but also...

IV. Contentment

Phil. 4.11-13 *I have learned to be content in whatever circumstance I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Christ who lives in me.*

“To live is Christ; to die is more of Christ.”

But to remain here on this earth, in this city, surrounded by God’s family – the church – the body of Christ – is to be content.

This week, I heard a sermon on the radio by another pastor whose name I did not get. He was talking about coming to Christ, and he pointed out something that I think is very important.

He said that he was not asking people to make a commitment of their lives to Christ. The reason he gave is that commitment is a decision we make from a self-perspective.

In essence, we say to Christ, “I have thought it over and weighed things in the balance and I have decided to come to you based on my will.”

Commitment is self-willed. On the other hand, surrender is “other”-willed.

Surrendering to Christ means that we say to Christ, “I have thought it over and know that your way is best. I surrender all of my will to your will – to your control.”

This morning, I call on you to surrender everything about your life to Christ. It is a form of dying – losing all that is you to Him – and at the same time, gaining all that is Christ in you.

For true salvation and the contentment that comes with it, it is the only way.

To be focused on life is to be focused on Christ.